

# **PROPOSED PLAN FOR ESTABLISHING AN INDIANA AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) PROGRAM AND TO BEGIN IMPLEMENTING INDIANA'S AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES (ANS) MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Late last year Indiana's ANS management plan was endorsed by Governor Kernan and subsequently approved by the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. This made Indiana eligible for a new federal grant. A first year funding proposal was submitted to the feds that was based on the priorities established by the work group that helped develop the ANS management plan (attached). That work group consisted of a broad cross-section of government and private stakeholders that have interest in and concerns about ANS issues. The funding proposal was approved and with signature of a federal cooperative agreement, Indiana is eligible for \$72,023 with a 25% cost share requirement for a total grant expenditure of \$96,031.

Nationally there is broad and growing recognition of the problems caused by aquatic invasive species. Zebra mussels were the first broadly recognized threat nationally and to Indiana. Snakeheads and Asian carp are now sharing the spotlight, but there are even more ominous species poised to invade Indiana. These concerns have translated into increased funding opportunities. This year there was a major move to reauthorize and increase funding for the National Invasive Species Act of 1996. This is the act that is currently providing the grant funds. The Council of Great Lakes Governors has been successful in getting CORE 1135 funds for construction of an AIS barrier in the Chicago Ship Canal. The governors and respective congressional delegations have been successful in acquiring new monies for Great Lakes restoration activities which has an invasive species component. Even the State's new Lake and River Enhancement program has an invasive species component. It is imperative for the State to be able to structurally take advantage of these new funding opportunities and to have the resources to carry out the public mandates on dealing with aquatic invasive species.

## **INDIANA NEEDS**

Indiana's aquatic nuisance species management plans recognizes a broad array of problems and activities that need to be addressed. What follows is a brief description of broad category needs with specific examples. Any AIS program will have the basic objective to prevent new invasions and to reduce the negative impacts of species already here.

**MONITORING AND TRACKING** – The management plan initially recognized 51 species causing problems or threatening Indiana. Only one, zebra mussel, has been monitored and tracked, but only through existing sampling for other reasons. A planned, systematic process needs to be developed to provide this basic information.

**RAPID RESPONSE PLANS** – Plans need to be developed on how the state is going to deal with new invasions as well as what to do about species already here. The cost of containing and preventing spread of a species early will be much less than waiting for it to become established. To date, there is no specific statewide plan to address any aquatic

invasive species. The closest plan is being developed by the Division of Nature Preserves regarding purple loosestrife.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION-** Many of the pathways for introduction of invasives come through movements and activities of people such as bait bucket and aquarium releases. A substantial I&E effort will have to be part of any successful campaign against invasives.

**INTERDEPARTMENT COORDINATION-AIS** issues concern the whole DNR. Successfully addressing any invasive species will require the mustering of DNR resources and division cooperation.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT-** A AIS technical advisory group of stakeholders will need to be developed to give guidance and public support for the AIS program and specific projects. We need to move ahead with bringing the aquarium trade into the program. That will require the involvement of the industry and public in deciding how best to deal with the over 1,000 aquatic species currently in trade.

**NEW LAWS AND REGULATIONS-**A DNR effort is underway to review and strengthen invasive species laws and regulations. Development of clean lists will require extensive work, especially when looking at new rules for the aquarium trade and bait dealers. There are also many pathway regulations being developed in other state that could be applicable to Indiana.

**NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION-** Much of Indiana's success with its AIS program will be dependant on the success of national and regional efforts. Whether or not Asian carp will invade Lake Michigan will be dependant on our cooperation and support for the barrier in Chicago. National ballast water laws and a new screening process for intentional importation of invasives into the country are required at a minimum to assist the state programs. Efforts need to continue for Indiana to be involved with at least the Great Lakes and Mississippi ANS Panels and the Council of Great Lakes Governor's AIS Task Force.

**RESEARCH COORDINATION-**As invasions occur there is a great need for development of new control methods and approaches. It will be largely incumbent upon the state to identify research needs and work with universities and consultants to satisfy these needs

## **AIS PROGRAM PROPOSAL**

It has been recognized by the Indiana ANS management plan work group and Division leaders within the DNR that a separate and distinct AIS program infrastructure and funding source needs to be developed that includes at least a full-time AIS coordinator just to begin to implement the management plan. The specific plan and approach follows.

**ESTABLISH AN AIS 600 ACCOUNT** – This will allow for tracking of grant money and enable contributions and withdrawals from multiple sources.

INITIALLY FUND THE PROGRAM THROUGH ELIGIBLE PROJECTS FROM THREE DNR DIVISIONS – Within the Division of Fish and Wildlife the current AIS work plan will be taken off the Sport Fish Restoration Grant and modified and moved to the AIS grant. The work plan will be modified to include the following with cost estimates.

New PAT 1 level AIS program coordinator	\$50,000	New money
AIS Program Administrator/ supervisor	20,000	Existing money
90 day naturalists aide level intermittent	7,000	Existing money
Existing DFW staff time on AIS activities	10,000	Existing money
Material and equipment support	5,000	Existing money
Total	\$92,000	

Since the Fish and Wildlife Fund is low and the Div. is using money that is federally reimbursable under another grant, the Division will seek 100% reimbursement from the 600 account with the AIS grant match coming from the other Division's unmatched eligible expenditures. Should some of the other Divisions' eligible expenditures fail to materialize, then some of DFW existing money expenditures may have to be used as match.

This approach requires the DFW to upfront the salary of the AIS coordinator and would require a corresponding budget increase. A much less desirable approach would be to fund the coordinator's position solely out of the 600 account. This would be a soft money approach with the position viewed as temporary. AIS issues have grown too important to the DFW and the DNR to risk program development with uncertain funding.

The Division of Nature Preserves is currently spending an estimated \$10,000 a year of unmatched expenditures coordinating the control of Purple loosestrife for the DNR and the State. These expenditures will be captured in a new work plan and submitted as an eligible AIS grant project. The first year funding proposal calls for the AIS coordinator to spend about 10% of his or her time helping the DNP coordinate this program. The best way for the new coordinator to do this would be to write the new work plan. The DNP is on CMS so this would be a grant auditable work plan. The work plan could be expanded to include all purple loosestrife control activities in all DNR divisions if an acceptable accounting process can be developed for the grant.

The DNP is also developing an expanded purple loosestrife control program proposal to be funded by the DSC LARE program. That proposal will call for about \$25,000 a year for two years. It will likely be a contract type project that would be eligible for the AIS grant and meet grant accounting requirements. The first year funding proposal also calls for the new AIS coordinator to spend about 15% of his or her time helping the DSC develop their program for dealing with aquatic invasive species. There is great potential to develop additional AIS projects that are compatible with the LARE program mission that would also be eligible for the AIS grant.

There are also AIS activities going on throughout the DNR that could be used in the AIS grant if an acceptable accounting system was in place. Such activities would include phragmites control on state forest property to zebra mussel warning signs at State Parks.

## **KEY ACTION ITEMS**

- Approval and creation of a 600 AIS account
- Approval and creation of PAT 1 PCN for the AIS coordinator
- Approval to upfront the AIS coordinator's salary out of the F&W fund.
- Approval of DFW budget increase for the AIS coordinator.
- Approval of strategy to developing eligible projects for the AIS grant
- Sign AIS grant cooperative agreement.